

Alice in Lyndhurst

A life of Alice Hargreaves with excerpts from the Alice books

A play by Nick Mellersh

Email: nick@mellersh.net

Web: www.mellersh.net

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Cast

Alice as an old woman	Mostly this is a monologue read by Alice - her memories of her life
Dodgson (Lewis Carrol) as a 30 year old man	
Alice as a young girl	
Ina, her elder sister	
Tillie, her younger sister	
"Pricks" their governess	
Relative of Mary Gailor (Alice's maid, later Mary Whitehorn)	

Characters from the book

White Rabbit	An occasional chorus
Humpty Dumpty	
Alice as Alice in Wonderland	Probably played by someone different to Alice as a young girl

Alice in Lyndhurst

(word count 12,997)

A performance combining the life of Alice Hargreaves with selections from Alice in Wonderland.

Alice Hargreaves née Alice Liddell was the girl for whom Alice in Wonderland was written

Alice sits front stage she is an old woman dressed in the fashion of the early 1930's. Her clothes are expensive. She could be reading what appears to be her diary. Enter Dodgson surrounded by the three Liddell girls – Ina, Alica and Tillie – he reads

1. Introductory Section

1.1 Introduction Humpty Dumpty

Dodgson: *(reads or maybe it is mimed with Alice and Humpty or maybe actually performed)*

Here's a question for you. said Humpty Dumpty — How old did you say you were?'

Alice made a short calculation, and said 'Seven years and six months.'

'Wrong!' Humpty Dumpty exclaimed triumphantly. 'You never said a word like it!' You never said anything about your age at all.

'I though you meant to ask me how old I was, Alice explained.

'If I'd meant that, I'd have said it,' said Humpty Dumpty.

'Seven years and six months! - an uncomfortable sort of age. Now if you'd asked MY advice, I'd have said "Leave off at seven"—but it's too late now.'

'I never ask advice about growing,' Alice said indignantly.

'Too proud?' the other inquired.

Alice felt even more indignant at this suggestion. 'I mean,' she said, 'that one can't help growing older.'

'ONE can't, perhaps,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'but TWO can. With proper assistance, you might have left off at seven.

1.2 Alice takes up the story

Alice:

(taking over the story – knowing that it is hers and almost waving Dodgson away)

“One can't but two can” I've often thought about it. One can't stop growing older when one is seven. Childhood passes and soon enough you are my age.

But can two stop it? Yes they can. Two did stop it. Two of us, that strange Mr Dodgson and I. Thanks to us, you think of Alice like this (*Beckons Little Alice*). Come here child. (*Little Alice comes over*). And you think of her as blonde the way that cartoonist Mr Teniel drew me and not a brunette like I always have been. You think of Alice as forever a child of seven wandering through a parody of the adult world.

Some think that it was all Mr Dodgson, or Lewis Carrol as you probably know him. He was the one that wrote the books and thought up the jokes and poems and riddles. But it was me too. If I hadn't cajoled him and kept on and on asking him for a copy to read, the Alice

books would never have been written down at all. And if it hadn't been for the Alice books, Lewis Carrol would be long forgotten.

We two did it. I was the Alice he told the story to, and I was the one who made him write it down. *(getting agitated)* Nobody will take the Alice books away from me. Oh yes Dodgson was the genius behind them, but it was I that was the spark.

I got tired of being Alice in Wonderland sometimes. Stupid questions always the same. "Was Dinah a real cat? "Did you really fall down a rabbit hole?" I remember one horrible little child saying "She hasn't got a long neck like the pictures Mummy." Stupid little thing with a stupid mother.

(Stops herself) Showing my temper I suppose you think. Yes you would here in Lyndhurst. I know the sort of things people said about me behind my back and after I was gone.

"Did you work for Alice, the Alice of Alice in Wonderland. What was she like?"

"Oh she was a disagreeable old woman. Nothing you did would ever please her. She was nothing like the girl in the book."

Well, I had standards and I had spirit and I was not one to be pushed around - especially by my servants. Dodgson saw that and put it in the books as well as a few remarks about my temper.

"I've got something important to say to you" "What is it?" "Keep your temper" said the caterpillar. That bit in the book always annoyed me.

We've got back to the books. It always goes back to Mr Dodgson and his books. And I only knew him for three or four years as a child. I had a whole life apart from him. I was beautiful and I was clever. Prince Leopold, queen Victoria's youngest son was one of my admirers. Ruskin the famous artist complimented me on my painting. I kept Lyndhurst as an important centre for people of culture for almost half a century.

But now I am remembered for the books. Perhaps it's natural. People only really remember genius and I was touched by the genius of Lewis Carroll for a few years. I was lucky. Or I suppose I was.

(Enter White Rabbit looking at his watch and hurrying across the stage)

White Rabbit

It's late. It's late. Oh my fur and whiskers there's a long tale to tell and you haven't even begun it.

Alice:

Well it's complicated. What do you suggest?

White Rabbit

Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end: then stop. That's my advice.

2 - Early life up to writing of Alice

2.1 Early days of Alice

Alice

All right then. I will, I will. Oh how aggravating the characters in those books can be. I was born. in 1852. Queen Victoria was on the throne and the British Empire was the

biggest empire the world had ever seen and the most powerful. It was a privilege to be part of it. It was families like mine that had made the empire. My father was the sort of man who had made it possible. He was a very intelligent and hard working man, and a famous one. Funnily enough, a lot of people think that the white rabbit might have been based on my father. Running around the quad at Christchurch college and always seeming to be late for his next appointment,

My father made his name by writing the first English Greek lexicon. Liddell and Scott – some of you may even have used it.

He became Dean of Christchurch College Oxford - the most important man in the most important college in Oxford university. My father was ambitious and so was my mother. She wanted to be the leader of Oxford society.

(Dodgson appears and shouts perhaps with a stammer on “Fiddle”(??))

Dodgson

He is the Dean, she's Mrs Liddell.

She plays the first, he second fiddle.

Alice

Who said that? Who repeated that scurrilous rhyme that used to annoy Mamma so. Mamma always supported Papa in all his plans to improve the university, just like I supported my husband Regi.

My mother and I had standards. We wanted to make sure the place we lived was a good Christian place and worthy of the British Empire. She did it in Oxford. I did it in Lyndhurst.

People like us have our detractors ... we have to live with the petty jealousies of our inferiors.

White Rabbit

It's getting late. It's getting late.

Alice

Yes I am aware that time is passing. But certain things must be understood when you are talking to people across 100 years. Things were different then, you must understand that everything was different.

Let me begin when we were young. We lived in this huge house in Christchurch college.

There was Ina, “Lorina” my big sister. Then there was I, Alice Pleasance, and then the baby - Tillie we called her, though her real name was Edith. We had a big brother Henry, but mostly we did not play with him. He liked boys games.

Lots of Professors and Dons lived in the college. They were mostly boring old clergymen. But one of them we did like. He was called Dodgson. Mamma wanted him to take photographs of us. Photographs were new things then. He said he must get to know us before he could take a likeness of us so he used to come round. He had tea with us and played, and told us jokes and stories and seeing him used to be a big treat.

2.2 Dodgson and girls tea party

(Dodgson is dragged on by three young girls, Ina, Alice and Tillie. They are excited.)

All girls (*At the same time - but not in chorus*)

Mr Dodgson, Mr Dodgson, come and see what we've been doing. We've been waiting for you for ages. Come and see, come and see!

Tillie

We've been dressing up – look at me, look at ME.

Young Alice

And I'm a beggar maid. And we've made this play. Tell him Ina

Ina

Well Mr Dodgson it's a story about this Princess who lives in a palace with the King and Queen. And the Queen is too strict and cruel and won't let the Princess out of the Palace.

Young Alice

She's a bit like Mamma, really.

Ina

No she is NOT. Mamma is not too strict and she is never cruel.

Young Alice

Yes she is. She won't let Dinah and the kittens play on the college lawn and that's cruelty to cats.

Ina

No it isn't

Young Alice

Yes it is.

Ina

I'm twelve years old and I know.

Young Alice

Well Dinah's my cat and she is thirty two years old in cat years and she thinks it is cruel. I can tell.

(Meanwhile Tillie has taken the cardboard crown she is wearing and is trying to put it on Dodgson)

Dodgson

(Trying to distract them) Ina, Alice, look at my crown do I make a good princess?

Tillie

You're not a princess you're a prince – stupid

(At which point enter Miss Prickett, the governess, She acts as if she is rather shocked at the high jinks, but is probably used to it.)

Miss Prickett

Girls, Mr Dodgson, what on earth is going on?

Dodgson

(recovering himself) Ah, Miss Prickett. The girls and I were just talking of the play they are currently writing.

Miss Prickett

(tutting in an aggravated manner) Mr Dodgson, you just encourage them to rough house.

Now girls, if Mr Dodgson is to stay to tea you must all sit down sensibly and talk like civilized human beings.

Young Alice

Tell us a story Mr Dodgson.

Tillie

Yes a story Mr Dodgson, a story, a story, a story.

Dodgson

No I'm too tired for a story today.

Ina

Could you sing us a song Mr Dodgson. Like you do for Mamma and Papa.

Dodgson

No, one of you sing. How about you Alice or Miss Prickett

Tillie

I'll sing, I'll sing. Listen everyone.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky

(Everyone claps)

Miss Prickett

Now you Mr Dodgson

Dodgson

That was so nice Tillie. Let me see if I can remember it. Alice, will you sing with me.
Everybody sing!

Dodgson *(above the others who sing under him)*

Twinkle, twinkle, little BAT

(Everybody stops singing)

Young Alice

It's not BAT, it's STAR

Dodgson

(mock serious) No no it's BAT. I remember being taught it as a child by the Bishop of Durham. He definitely said "bat".

Twinkle twinkle little BAT
How I wonder what you're AT
Up above the world so high
Like a TEA TRAY in the sky.

(He holds up a tea tray above his head and runs around with it.)

Young Alice

Don't be silly Mr Dodgson. Bat's don't twinkle.

Dodgson:

Well the Bishop said they did and he was an expert on chiroptera (that's bats to you girls from the Greek for hand wings). .

Ina

I wish you would sing us a **real** song like you did for Mamma and Papa

Young Alice

BATS DON'T TWINKLE!

Tillie

And they don't look like tea trays

Dodgson

They do if you do the proper actions. There are special gestures and Anglo-Saxon attitudes you have to do. Then a tea tray looks just like a bat. Or you can do it with a sheet of paper. Hold it above your head and flap it as you run round. It looks just like a bat.

Tillie

Like this ? *(she tries to do it)*

Dodgson

Yes only you hold your hands higher and run around. *(He does so chanting)* Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle twinkle. Com on everybody let's do it. Faster faster faster. Make those bats really twinkle.

(They all get bits of paper and run around flapping them about over their heads singing "Twinkle, twinkle little Bat", Eventually even Miss Prickett joins in and they all run off laughing with pleasure at their stupid game.)

The attention switches back to the old Alice who takes up the story)

2.3 – Alice talks about Wonderland

Alice

That was us and our governess, "Pricks", Miss Prickett when Mr Dodgson came to tea. We used to have wonderful times. I can see now that Pricks had taken quite a shine to Dodgson. She would stop being strict and tiresome and come over all girlish.

We all loved it. Dodgson was so full of invention. New songs, silly poems, new games, strange inventions that he would bring in his pockets. Ideas for dressing up and stories. His stories were wonderful!

Dodgson did photograph me dressed as a beggar maid by the way. Here it is.

(Photo shown during the next section various photos of Alice and the girls are shown to match the script)

He took lots of photographs of us. In dressing up clothes, with our dolls, sitting together, and alone. Mamma did not want it for us, but Dodgson took lots of photographs of girls naked of course like all photographers did then.

Yes, I know, they would put him in prison nowadays and print column after column in the Sun of gloating reports about it. And just beside it there would be huge photographs of half naked young women offering themselves blatantly to every man who opened the newspaper.

Fortunately we were not as hung up about nakedness then as everyone is now.

Dodgson was a wonderful photographer. I had some pictures taken by lots of the famous photographers of the time. This is one taken by Margaret Cameron who lived near to Tennyson on the Isle of Wight. Look what she made of me. A most peculiar likeness, I have always thought. No, I prefer Dodgson's.

We girls thought he was wonderful. "The best friend a child could ever have" I once said.

We saw a lot of Dodgson at that time. We used to go out on boating picnics down the Isis with him and his friend Duckworth, and he used to tell us stories.

One of the stories was so exciting I begged him to write it down and that why you are here listening to me. It was the first version of Alice in Wonderland. I was ten years old and this was the moment in my life that would make me famous, and I was not even aware that it was special.

It was a golden afternoon boating on the river. Us three girls, Duckworth and Dodgson. Sometimes we would take a turn at the oars but mostly it was the men that did it while we held the ropes that controlled the tiller. After we begged him for almost half an hour, Dodgson started to tell us the story.

2.4 Dodgson Golden Afternoon poem

Dodgson

(reads poem)

All in the golden afternoon
Full leisurely we glide;
For both our oars, with little skill,
By little arms are plied,
While little hands make vain pretense
Our wanderings to guide.

Imperious Ina flashes forth
Her edict, to begin it
In gentler tone sweet Alice hopes
"There will be nonsense in it!"
While Tillie interrupts the tale
Not more than once a minute.

Anon, to sudden silence won,
In fancy they pursue
The dream-child moving through a land

Of wonders wild and new,
In friendly chat with bird or beast --
And half believe it true.

Thus grew the tale of Wonderland:
Thus slowly, one by one,
Its quaint events were hammered out
And now the tale is done,
And home we steer, a merry crew,
Beneath the setting sun.

2.5 Alice resumes the tale

Alice

Well that is about the way it was on that famous afternoon..

Once Mr Dodgson had got started there was no stopping him. We three girls lay back in the boat starrng up at the sky and listened to the splash of the oars and swoosh of the boat as it hissed its way over the water and all the while Mr Dodgson's voice told the strange tale.

When it was finished I knew I wanted to hear it again. "Write it down, Mr. Dodgson, write it down for us." All us girls said it and even the Reverend Duckworth.

And so we were put to bed that night tired and excited and Tillie crying a little bit and Ina and I lay in our beds talking for hours as it grew dark over Oxford.

Music

(Song Row Row)

3 Dodgson is "banished" Albert dies

3.1 Dodgson is banished

Alice

(Taking up the tale again) There was a big change soon after this. Mamma decided that we were seeing too much of Mr Dodgson . He was "not a suitable friend".

I couldn't understand it. I wanted more stories and more fun but Mamma was adamant. I cried and shouted and sulked but it made no difference. The friendship had to stop. We hardly talked to him after that and when we met him in the college or in the street we as good as "cut" him. Everybody did what Mamma told them, even Papa. It must have hurt Dodgson a lot.

Do you remember this bit out of "Through the Looking Glass"? It's at the start of the meal to celebrate Alice becoming a Queen."

Dodgson

3.2 Dodgson reads the bit about "cutting"

(Reads)

There were three chairs at the head of the table; the Red and White Queens had already taken two of them, but the middle one was empty. Alice sat down in it, rather uncomfortable in the silence, and longing for some one to speak.

At last the Red Queen began. 'You've missed the soup and fish,' she said. 'Put on the joint!' And the waiters set a leg of mutton before Alice, who looked at it rather anxiously, as she had never had to carve a joint before.

'You look a little shy; let me introduce you to that leg of mutton,' said the Red Queen. 'Alice—Mutton; Mutton—Alice.'

The leg of mutton got up in the dish and made a little bow to Alice; and Alice returned the bow, not knowing whether to be frightened or amused.

'May I give you a slice?' she said, taking up the knife and fork, and looking from one Queen to the other.

'Certainly not,' the Red Queen said, very decidedly: 'it isn't etiquette to cut any one you've been introduced to.'

3.3 Death of Albert – start of dancing lessons

Alice

I think this might have been Dodgson's revenge on my mother – all this talk about “cutting” people you had been introduced to.

Anyway we all got used to it in the end. Even poor Mr Dodgson and we girls had plenty of other things to think about.

After we stopped seeing Mr Dodgson the death of baby brother Albert is what I remember most. Albert was born in the year that Prince Albert, the Queen's husband died and named after him. I remember Mama and Papa distraught and the tiny coffin at the funeral service. This was my first taste of the death of a child.

But infant deaths were more accepted and expected then and life went on and things settled back until they seemed normal once again. And of course we had our faith that this was all part of God's plan and that one day we would understand the reason why little Albert had to go..

We three girls were growing up and had plenty to think of and to look forward to particularly the college balls and dances – they were the big thing in our lives. We spent hours in the dancing classes learning the complicated steps of dances like the quadrille.

Maybe you remember Dodgson's poem about the Lobster Quadrille

3.4 Dodgson reads Lobster Quadrille

Dodgson

(reads from Lobster Quadrille)

'Oh, YOU sing,' said the Gryphon. 'I've forgotten the words.' So they began solemnly dancing round and round Alice, every now and then treading on her toes when they passed too close, and waving their forepaws to mark the time, while the Mock Turtle sang this, very slowly and sadly:—

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to a snail.

"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail.

See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!

They are waiting on the shingle—will you come and join the dance?

Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?

Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?

"

*You can really have no notion how delightful it will be
When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea!"
But the snail replied "Too far, too far!" and gave a look askance—
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance.*

4. After Dodgson to death of Tillie

4.1 Dances and first meeting with Regie

Alice

The quadrille was a bit like that. Very complicated. I never danced with a whiting or a snail but sometimes it seemed as if it would have been an improvement on some of the undergraduates who danced with us.

It was at one of these dances that I first first met Regie, Reginald Hargreaves the man who became my husband. Unlike most of them he was a wonderful dancer. I'd seen him around the college and noticed him. He was so big and strong and a great dancer, when he picked you up you felt as if he might throw you out to sea! And he wasn't a total duffer at conversation either.

The trouble was that he danced with Tillie just as often as he danced with me. I was so jealous. But I'm skipping over a couple of things.

4.2 Art classes from Ruskin

First my art training with Mr Ruskin. Mr Ruskin was a famous artist and the first art professor at Oxford and was a good friend of my father. It was he that really taught me how to appreciate art and how to do watercolours. He became a great favourite of mine I used to invite him to tea and used to tell me I had real talent. Certainly my watercolours were well above the average. Here are some of them - (*she points to the screen which shows water colour slides.*)

4.3 The Grand tour

Oh yes that one was done on our "grand tour."

Despite Mama's opposition Papa insisted that us girls should see something of European culture and some of the great classical sights of Italy. We toured round Europe for three months - us girls and our chaperones. It was very exciting we saw everything! The most exciting time was climbing Vesuvius. The guide took a real fancy to Ina and took her so close to the edge that she had to stay in bed for several days afterwards - what with the horrible smell of sulfur.

4.4. Ina's wedding

Soon after we came back from our tour, Ina became engaged to a Mr William Skene who was connected with one of the other Oxford colleges. She had been talking about him on our grand tour so it was no big surprise to Tillie and me.

There was a huge wedding on a frosty morning in Christchurch cathedral. Tillie and I were bridesmaids. There was lots of talk about which one of us would be the next bride.

4.5 Prince Leopold

About that time in Oxford there was a lot of excitement about Prince Leopold. He was Queen Victoria's youngest son and he came to Christchurch to finish his education (and to get away from his Mamma, so the gossips said.) Well Tillie and I were the only girls around the college and he used to often come to tea (supposedly with Mamma and Papa of course.) Mamma got very excited and dreamt that one of us would marry into royalty.

Well I was never very interested because Leopold was not healthy. He had hemophilia like so many of the European princes. It came down the Hapsburg line. I always preferred more manly men, though Leopold and I had a lot of fun out rowing on the river. I remember at one point I knocked his face with one of the oars and gave him a black eye. There were lots of jokes between us about what the Queen would say about it and whether she would have me shut up in the tower or beheaded for injuring her favourite son.

“Mamma will behave just like the queen in Mr Dodgson's book and scream 'off with your head'” he laughed, “so I'd better not tell her!”

Tillie was friends with him too – more than I was, I used to think. But anyway Leopold ended up marrying a princess from somewhere in Europe. We stayed good friends and he sent me a lovely wedding gift and agreed to be the godfather to my second son, who we called Leopold in his honour. In turn, he called his daughter Alice - Princess Alice of Athlone she became.

In the family we always called our son “Rex” (his second name was Reginald after his father). We made the servants call him “Master Leopold” though. It was important that they should realise he had a prince for a godfather.

4.6 Tillie's death

Around this time Tillie realised that Aubrey Harcourt was the one for her. He lived along the river at Nuneham where we had often rowed with Mr Dodgson. Anyway Aubrey and Tillie courted each other for a year and then there was great rejoicing at the announcement of their engagement.

And then – and then – I hate to remember it, just four days later Tillie felt a sudden stomach pain and took to her bed. It was a blockage in her intestine and the doctors could do nothing for her. Four days after the announcement of her engagement she was dead.

Everyone was devastated. Mamma and Papa and Aubrey of course and me. Poor little Tillie, the companion of my childhood was gone.

4.7 Wake up after mourning

My life closed down. I went through the forms and attended the funeral and went through the mourning period wearing black of course. But the next few years were like a living death. It needed something – some huge event - or somebody to take me out of it. And then somebody did it, it was Reginald Hargreaves, Regie, my darling husband.

In the spring of 1880 as the leaves and flowers were coming out all over Oxford the darkness seemed to fade. I was alive again and there was Regie. In July he asked my father's permission to take my hand in marriage then he proposed to me. My heart leaped as I said “Yes”. Suddenly everything changed and all our thoughts were about the future.

Perhaps I should mention Aubrey. He never seemed to recover at all from Tillie's death. He did not get married and lived almost as a hermit for the rest of his life.

4.8 Song

A song to mark the change of mood and place

5 Courtship and Marriage to Regie

5.1 Love Letters visiting Cuffnells

Back to Regie. He had inherited Cuffnells the estate in Lyndhurst in the New Forest from his father. I looked at it and fell in love with it straight away. We decided that this was the place we were going to live. Nobody had lived there since Regie's father had died some ten years before so I could make changes without upsetting his family.

I've been looking back at some of the letters we wrote to each other at that silly sweet time of first love and new plans and new beginnings.

Regie wrote this – can you imagine and he always seemed the most solid and least romantic of men.

Darling Alice

I have been sitting looking at your dear name and feeling as if I should like to go on writing it again and again instead of a letter.

So it went on ... Dearest Regie, Darling Alice, Dearest Sweetest Regie, Darling Darling Alice

and me about the new house at Cuffnells.

“Dearest Regie

I do hope it will be a real fairyland to us both as long as we are permitted to enjoy it dear. “Wonderland” come true to Alice at last!”

5.2 Wedding

Enough. The wedding was wonderful. At Westminster Abbey, much to Mamma's delight n. Me in an amazing white dress and my little sisters, Rhoda and Violet, as bridesmaids. And Regie looking so strong and handsome in a dress suit.

Oh yes, I haven't mentioned them before have I? Rhoda was seven years younger than I and Violet and Rhoda twelve. I had two younger brothers as well. We were a large family.

Then the honeymoon. First a wonderful three weeks at a house lent to use by one of Regie's relations. We played at calling each other “Mr and Mrs Hargreaves” and giggling at the thought of it. And we walked through their wonderful grounds and gazed at the flowers in their ornamental garden. It was lovely. Then ,a few months later, Regie and I went traveling in Spain. I enjoyed it but Regie didn't. He could never really forgive foreigners for not speaking English. Or, if they could speak English, he could not forgive them for not **being** English. Poor Regie that was one of his weaknesses.

6 - Married life in Lyndhurst

6.1 Reggie and Alice effect on Lyndhurst

Alice

So I had arrived in Lyndhurst, and Lyndhurst was to be my main home for almost fifty years. A very different place it was then. Much smaller with far fewer people and no school or opportunities for young people to expand their horizons. Reggie and I were the leaders in the good changes that happened to Lyndhurst over those years. Oh I know that Cuffnells is long gone but the effect we had on Lyndhurst is still there to be seen, and it seems to me that it is all to the good.

St Michael's church here had recently been rebuilt by public subscription and that was a splendid start. Reggie and I carried on from there were instrumental in building the schools, both here in Lyndhurst and in Emery Down. Reggie was keen on sport and healthy exercise and it is thanks to him there is a cricket pitch up at Swan Green. He encouraged the owner of Northerwood to build it. We had our own at Cuffnells of course.

Reggie started the boy scout troop, and the cricket club and became a magistrate of course, and was something big in the Conservative club. And there were always constant appeals for worthy causes

Appealer 1:

Mrs Hargreaves we would be so grateful if you could support our appeal to build a staff house at school at Lyndhurst

Appealer 2: ..and just as needy is the school at Emery Down

Appealer 3: And a very worthy cause a mission to the Zulus

Alice

I started up a branch of the Women's Institute in Emery Down. It was expected of us that we should do such things and we always tried to do our duty. And I always liked to improve the lot of the women of the Forest.

Appealer 1...and the Sudanese orphans

Appealer 2...and the Girl Guides are a very worthy cause.....

Alice

And so it went on. We did our best to stop Lyndhurst becoming too common and too overrun with tourists. There was talk of the railway line being extended up to Lyndhurst and they even started building a railway station at the bottom of the High Street. It's a car showroom now. Reggie and I, and most of the better class people, were against that and in the end it did not happen. We later fought against the introduction of Electricity to the village. I think perhaps we were wrong about that.

So when you look around Lyndhurst today you can still see signs of the many good things that Reggie and I helped to start.

But life isn't all good causes and charity work, though there were times when it seemed as if it was, I must confess.

Appealer 3: Mrs Hargreaves we are hoping that you and your husband could see your way ...

Alice

Enough, enough, like I said life isn't all supporting good causes. Most of my life, most of my fun was with my family. With Reggie, with my sisters and brothers who were still mostly in Oxford, and later of course with the children.

Now I've said that I fell in love with Cuffnells right from the start and it's true. But Cuffnells was the first house of my own and I couldn't help being a little apprehensive. Do you remember those bits in the Alice books where she is shut out in front of a huge door and doesn't know how to get in. Dodgson captured them so well. I remember feeling that as a child and I felt just a little of it moving into Cuffnells

6.2 Dodgson reads (as kids mime) Frog Footman section

"The footman was sitting on the ground near the door, staring stupidly up into the sky. Alice went timidly up to the door, and knocked.

'There's no sort of use in knocking,' said the Footman, 'and that for two reasons. First, because I'm on the same side of the door as you are; secondly, because they're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you.' And certainly there was a most extraordinary noise going on within.

'Please, then,' said Alice, 'how am I to get in?'

'There might be some sense in your knocking,' the Footman went on without attending to her, 'if we had the door between us. For instance, if you were INSIDE, you might knock, and I could let you out, you know.' He was looking up into the sky all the time he was speaking, and this Alice thought decidedly uncivil. 'But perhaps he can't help it,' she said to herself; 'his eyes are so VERY nearly at the top of his head. But at any rate he might answer questions.—How am I to get in?' she repeated, aloud. 'I shall sit here,' the Footman remarked, 'till tomorrow—' At this moment the door of the house opened, and a large plate came skimming out, straight at the Footman's head: it just grazed his nose, and broke to pieces against one of the trees behind him.

'—or next day, maybe,' the Footman continued in the same tone, exactly as if nothing had happened.

'How am I to get in?' asked Alice again, in a louder tone. 'ARE you to get in at all?' said the Footman. 'That's the first question, you know.'

It was, no doubt: only Alice did not like to be told so. 'It's really dreadful,' she muttered to herself, 'the way all the creatures argue. It's enough to drive one crazy!'

The Footman seemed to think this a good opportunity for repeating his remark, with variations. 'I shall sit here,' he said, 'on and off, for days and days.'

'But what am I to do?' said Alice.

'Anything you like,' said the Footman, and began whistling."

6.3 Moving into Cuffnells

Well going into Cuffnells for the first time did bring a few butterflies to my stomach but my fears proved groundless. By early 1881 we were installed at Cuffnells and starting our new life. Meanwhile the world had moved on of course. Gladstone was prime minister and there was much talk of Irish problems and reform in education. But Regie and I were more

interested in starting our new life in Lyndhurst.

I really loved Cuffnells . It was in a beautiful spot and had some amazing rooms in it. The main bedroom had been slept in by George III lots of times and it had gold plated taps in the hand basin. And there was a room decorated with huge Italian murals when the painters had been specially brought over from Italy.

Oh and those were such happy times. The forest was at it's most beautiful during the first few months and the excitement of decorating Cuffnells to our taste was intoxicating. We were busy but we had so much fun. I remember Reggie waltzing me round underneath the Italian murals to imaginary music. And we had such times playing at being Royalty in the bedroom where kings had slept and turning on and off our gold plated taps.

You probably find it hard to imagine what it is like to run a big house with a dozen or more servants. Well, believe me, it is hard work and it's an art. Fortunately I had Mama's example to follow. She had been wonderful at running our household at the college in Oxford. And of course I was twenty eight when I got married and not some slip of a girl who was intimidated by the housekeeper and the cook.

When we first moved into Cuffnells there was lots of planning to do as well. Schemes for the sort of people we would invite down for the weekends. I wanted the sort of artists and writers we had mixed with at Oxford. But I had to think of Regie now as well. He used to like shooting weekends, and weekends for cricket and billiards. He was good at billiards and after an evening with the men would always come out a sovereign or two to the good. He was good at cricket too, in fact he used to play for Hampshire quite regularly.

Those early times were busy. We had to meet all the neighbours from the nearby big houses. Northerwood was less than a mile away and Coxlease just the other side of the village.

6.4 Birth of boys

We had hardly settled into the place, or so it seemed to me, than I was in what was called a “delicate condition”. It was a great joy when my first boy was born . We called him Alan.

Two years later we had our second son. We christened him Leopold Reginald. Leopold after the prince and Reginald after Regie his father.

Everything changed with the birth of the two boys. My life was centred around them for a few years. Of course I had a nursery maid to help me with some of the work, but there was little time for visiting and going to house parties with Regie.

Regie loved the boys and could not wait until the time when he could play cricket with them and teach them how to shoot and ride. He used to take them off on his shoulders and show them round the park. We had a cricket field built at Cuffnells. I think Regie built it so that the boys would have somewhere to play when they grew older.

The first two boys were really close together but it was four years before the birth of our youngest son Caryl (*pronounced Carroll*). People used to ask if we had named him after Lewis Carroll – Dodgson's pen name. We didn't. We spelled it “C” “A” “R” “Y” “L”. It was a name that Regie and I found in a novel and we liked it.

So that was three boys we had in the first seven years at Cuffnells – wonderful strong boys just like Regie. I used to sit at the window and watch them romping about on the lawn or going down to the boating lake and think how lucky I was.

6.5 Boys go to boarding school – life after this visitors writers etc

But boys must grow into men and it didn't seem long before they were all packed off to boarding school where they could learn to be men like Regie, the sort of brave, manly men that built the British Empire.

They came back for the holidays of course and those were joyous times of parties and tennis and riding and meeting up with the young neighbours from the big houses. It was so sad when they left to go back to school. I always used to weep when they were leaving, though I hid my tears of course. I expect they did the same.

There were a lot of social duties that one had to perform as the owner of the most important house in the Lyndhurst area. Making sure the social calendar went successfully and that no one was missed out or received more attention than they deserved. Trying to add to the intellectual life of the Forest was another of my ambitions. I used to invite writers and artists and thinkers down to Cuffnells.

Of course we regularly attended the services at the local churches. We had a Hargreaves pew right here in St Michaels. There it is, that one there at the front. It was fortunate that the church had been completely rebuilt a few years before I came to the village. Lord Leighton had done a wonderful mural of the wise and foolish virgins behind the altar. The story goes that one of the wise virgins is a portrait of me. Third one from the left, I believe. (*check this*) I don't think it can be true as the fresco was painted several years before I came to Lyndhurst. Still Leighton was a good friend of William Richmond who had painted me and my sisters at our holiday home in Llandudno and Leighton had met us all.

Lord Leighton and his friend Hamilton Aidee were frequent visitors to Cuffnells.

As for writers, we often had them come down to Cuffnells. Kipling visited us a number of times. In later years we had Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, come down to live on the other side of Minstead. He was a most peculiar man and believed in fairies and spiritualism.. He said that his Red Indian spirit Guide had found him his house in the forest. Well, I imagine spirit guides come cheaper than estate agents and are probably not as tiresomely sycophantic. We didn't have Mr Dodgson to visit of course. He was not considered a serious literary figure in those days – just a humourist and an eccentric. And frankly I always found it embarrassing to meet someone I had been so close to as a child.

I'd learned to play the piano and sing as had my sisters and we often had musical evenings at Cuffnells. Sometimes famous performers would come and we would invite the more discerning of our neighbours.

Of course there was family correspondence to keep up with as well. I tried to make each letter a little work of art and an epistle to remember.

I used to get such joy from my sisters letters and so many chuckles from the stories they told of their lives. My two younger sisters were still in Oxford. But my brothers were spread wide over the Empire.

My younger sister Rhoda had an awful time at one point and was considering a most unsuitable marriage. With Mamma's help I managed to dissuade her from it.

6.6 Fêtes and events at Cuffnells

We used to hold fêtes and garden parties for the village every year at Cuffnells.

I remember for one of the fêtes Regie collected some of the trophies that General Gordon had brought back from the Opium Wars in China and we had those on display. We got huge crowds in the park and they even laid on special coaches from the railway station at Lyndhurst Road - Ashurst station they call it now.

It was quite a performance organising these fêtes, I can tell you. We used to joke that it was a bit like a cross between the croquet party in Alice in Wonderland and the Mad Hatter's Tea party. I remember the mad hatters tea party well. We played at it when we were girls and I did again with my boys when I taught them to read from the Alice books. Here it is. Typical of Dodgson with it's silly riddles and crazy logic.

6.7 Mad hatters tea party excerpt

Dodgson (*Reads. Maybe with mimed support from Alice and the other characters*)

There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep,

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide and said, 'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?'

'Come, we shall have some fun now!' thought Alice. 'I'm glad they've begun asking riddles.—I believe I can guess that,' she added aloud.

'Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?' said the March Hare.

'Exactly so,' said Alice.

'Then you should say what you mean,' the March Hare went on.

'I do,' Alice hastily replied; 'at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know.'

'Not the same thing a bit!' said the Hatter. 'You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see"!''

'You might just as well say,' added the March Hare, 'that "I like what I get" is the same thing as "I get what I like"!''

'Have you guessed the riddle yet?' the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

'No, I give it up,' Alice replied: 'what's the answer?'

'I haven't the slightest idea,' said the Hatter.

'Nor I,' said the March Hare.

6.8 More about Cuffnells events

Village fêtes seemed about as chaotic as that. But on the whole more fun. There was a whole timetable for feeding. First the servants. Then the villagers, then there was strawberries and cream for the village bigwigs like the vicar and the JPs. Last there was a proper afternoon tea for the family and our personal guests at Cuffnells.

I rarely got time to eat at all. I used to run one of the stalls selling trinkets given by me and my sisters and a few of the less expensive clothes that they and I had finished with. Very often they would be with me because they would come down to Cuffnells to share the fun. Good heavens how the village women and the gypsies used to rush to find a bargain at our stall. Elbows would be out and umbrella's flying. I sometimes felt that one day blood would be spilled.

6.9 Local colour Brusher Mills

Lyndhurst was a wonderful place then with the ponies walking up and down the High Street and sometimes there were cows and even pigs and donkeys. All very picturesque. Quite a few real characters lived around the village. Brusher Mills was the most famous.

(at this point Brusher appears maybe in the centre of the audience)

Brusher:

(talking directly to the audience) Collect vipers here, I do. Cunning little varmint, them vipers, there be a lot of them round here in the forest. Sends 'em up in a crate to London zoo from Brockenhurst station, I do. Gets a few measly pence for each of them I catch. And each one of them could kill a grown man, killed lots of unwary men they have, them vipers.

Now most people they walk through the forest and don't notice them see. But there's thousands of them here squirming around the undergrowth. So tread careful.. *(drops a rubber snake from his pocket)* Heaven preserve us there's one there. Stay still madam, stay still sir. They only bite things as move. Now watch. You have to approach slow and then dive very fast with a stick. *(he does so, grabs it holds it up as he wriggles it violently and shoves it in his bag)*. Safe now. I could have saved you from a very nasty bite madam. Maybe you can see a way to help a poor man who has to earn his pence in such a dangerous trade

Alice:

Leave them alone Brusher. We know it came out of your pocket.

(Brusher goes off grumbling and muttering)

One had to admire his ingenuity in the way he earned his pennies from unsuspecting tourists.. I only wish the man had washed a bit more often. He really did smell very strong.

Oh dear, Oh dear. All this is tiring. I could do with a little a little rest and refreshment now. Perhaps you feel the same. I'll be back to tell you the rest of my story in a few minutes.

(She walks off to some sort of music)

INTERVAL

7. Leading up to the war and the war itself

7.1 Edwardian days and motor car

Where was I then? Ah yes I remember, around the turn of the century

On that first day of 20th century I remember the butler bringing the Times into breakfast. Every page was printed in gold ink to celebrate the power and importance of the British Empire. The nineteen hundreds were going to be Britain's golden age.

All this time the boys were growing. Soon they came back from school with deep broken voices and it was possible to believe that they would soon become men. When Queen Victoria died in 1902, the two elder boys were grown up. Alan had received his commission and was in the army. Rex, Leopold as he was properly called, had left school and was helping Regie with the estate and the other Hargreaves business. Caryl was only fifteen but he towered over me. It was clear that he too would soon be a grown man.

This was around the time when we got our new motor. It was a Rolls Royce of course no 52 if I remember rightly. The coachman Mr O'Dell was sent off to the chauffeurs course and eventually came back with this shining new machine. When we took it down to Lyndhurst the villagers surrounded it in a huge circle of gazing amazement. Regie learned to drive it very soon after and the boys were always pestering him to let them drive it round the park.

He didn't let any of them touch it for several years. (*I've made this up about the boys and not driving but it sounds plausible.*)

Edwardian days! History has them as golden sunny afternoons with cricket and croquet and tennis parties and laughing girls in big hats. The boys were staving to get interested in girls then. Alan had a short infatuation with a girl from somewhere around Christchurch or Lymington, I believe, but I didn't even have to talk to him before he realised that she wasn't suitable.

But they were happy times at Cuffnells with parties and weekend visits galore, and Regie and the boys loved it. But when I look back it seems full of portents about the future.

7.2 Premonitions of war

I remember Regie tutting over the Times at breakfast as he read of the Kaiser building ironclads and soon having a fleet of battleships as large as that of the British Empire. "Kaiser Bill may be a nephew of the old queen but he was getting above himself and we needed to teach him a lesson" Regie used to say. A "whiff of grapeshot would do these Germans a power of good.

I remember the naval review at Cowes. You could see the Isle of White from Cuffnells and we watched the smoke and the fireworks from our windows. We went down to see the ships at Lymington and I gazed at those huge great ironclads bristling with guns and wondered what they could be for except to fight one another. The two nations were arming just like Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Remember the bit from the book.

7.3 Dodgson reads Tweedledum and Tweedledee while kids mime

Alice was just going to say 'Good-night' and leave them, when Tweedledum sprang out from under the umbrella and seized her by the wrist.

'Do you see THAT?' he said, in a voice choking with passion, and his eyes grew large and yellow all in a moment, as he pointed with a trembling finger at a small white thing lying under the tree.

'It's only a rattle,' Alice said,

'I knew it was!' cried Tweedledum, beginning to stamp about wildly and tear his hair. 'It's spoilt, of course!'

Alice laid her hand upon his arm, and said in a soothing tone, 'You needn't be so angry about an old rattle.'

'But it isn't old!' Tweedledum cried, in a greater fury than ever. 'It's new, I tell you—I bought it yesterday—my nice New RATTLE!' and his voice rose to a perfect scream.

'Of course you agree to have a battle?' Tweedledum said in a calmer tone.

'I suppose so,' the other sulkily replied, as he crawled out of the umbrella: 'only SHE must help us to dress up, you know.' So the two brothers went off hand-in-hand into the wood, and returned in a minute with their arms full of things—such as bolsters, blankets, hearth-rugs, table-cloths, dish-covers and coal-scuttles.

"I hope you're a good hand at pinning and tying strings?" Tweedledum remarked. 'Every one of these things has got to go on, somehow or other.'

Alice said afterwards she had never seen such a fuss made about anything in all her life—the way those two bustled about—and the quantity of things they put on—and the trouble they gave her in tying strings and fastening buttons"

7.3 Start of the war

Of course, in the story, Tweedledum and Tweedledee were scared off by the shadow of monstrous crow. But the shadow of war excites people as much as it frightens them and in that terrible year of 1914 the fight began.

Alan and Rex were in the Army already and Caryl hurried to join them (*check this if you can*) Regie wished that he was young enough to join up too but as he was already over sixty, I was spared the horror of having my husband at war.

Oh I remember those early days of the war. With flags waving, and singing and placards everywhere. And services in the church where we all prayed that we might serve the good and have an early victory.

We dreamt that our boys would soon return as heroic victors. You remember the Jabberwocky poem. Us mothers saw our sons setting off to war and imagined them returning triumphant having defeated the evil aggressor.:

Dodgson (*reads*)

He took his vorpal sword in hand: ... and then ...

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

‘And has thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!’
She chortled in her joy.

It wasn't like that. Slowly one learned of more and more friends and neighbours whose sons would never come back at all. Then there was the first death of a soldier from Lyndhurst and all of us began to shudder at the thought of a telegraph boy coming up the road on his bicycle.

7.4 Death of Alan and Rex

The telegraph boy came up the East Drive to Cuffnells in 1916. Thank God, thank God Alan was only wounded. He recovered quickly enough and after 14 days leave with us in Cuffnells set of again to France quite happy and determined to do his duty.

The next telegram was different. I remember Regie standing white faced with the paper crumpled in his hands. Alan, our eldest, had been killed in action “somewhere on the Western front.” And then it seemed only a few weeks later but it was really more than a year. This time our second son Rex had been killed in the service of his King and country.

My two eldest boys gone. Dear God how I hate war. My two boys. My two lovely boys!

We prayed, and prayed and lived with our hearts in our mouthes and thank God Caryl survived the next two years and came back to us after the war was ended.

8. After the war

8.1 Changes brought by peace

Peace! How glorious it seemed at first. But nothing was the same. Poor Regie never really recovered from the two deaths. Between them they killed him too and he was nothing but a walking shadow after the war. Caryl, God bless him, did all he could to break Regie out of his silence and despair but he never really succeeded.

And then everything was so much more expensive and the whole attitude of the country seemed to have changed. We were both in our seventies then and we could not understand the new world. The British Empire had won the war but everything that Regie and I had held dear about Britain seemed to have been washed away in those ghastly years of war.

And the new people that came down to the Forest, money mostly made in the war. “War profiteers” Regie used to call them. They lured away all the best servants and could afford to pay them outrageous wages.

8.2 Servant problems and the Gailor girl.

Servants, oh yes I expect some of you people from Lyndhurst have heard the story about the Gailor girl. Well she was rather a silly little thing and never very satisfactory as far as I was concerned. Everyone knows of course that windows and shutters must be opened before a fireplace is cleaned out, Otherwise the dust that is raised is bound to stay in the room and cover any precious objects. Well cleaning the fire was the Gailor girl's job but she hated opening the windows particularly when it was cold. She used to say that opening the shutters hurt her chilblains. One morning, thinking that I was well asleep, she cleaned out the fire with the windows and shutters closed.

I almost felt sorry for the girl when I opened the door and walked in on her. She jumped a mile and went bright scarlet. The next ten minutes were full of “Oh my Lady, this” and “Oh my lady, that” and “Oh these terrible chilblains, I can hardly even bear to pick up the hearth brush.”

Well I'm not even sure that she had chilblains at all. And if she did it was probably because she didn't have the sense to sleep in gloves in the servants bedrooms. Anyway the upshot of it was I sent down to the chemist for some chilblain ointment and, naturally enough took the price of the ointment out of her wages for the next few weeks. I'm sure the silly girl learned a good lesson from that and always respected me for it.

8.3 Exchange with Gailor relative

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8.3 Exchange with Gailor relative

Friend of Mary:

Excuse me!

Alice

(Makes as if to continue) Well as I was

Friend of Mary:

(With insistence) Excuse me, but I knew that silly girl you are talking about she was a very sensible woman. She used to baby sit for me. She talked a lot about you, I can tell you.

Alice

And did she respect me for the lesson?

Friend:

No she thought you were a horrible mistress of a horrible house and would never hear a good word about you.

Alice

Humph, and what happened to her after she left my service?

Friend:

She went to Minstead Rectory.

Alice:

I've heard that the gardener there used to leave a ladder by the servants quarters so the maids could go to the village dances.

Whitehorn:

Mary told me about that. Everyone was kind to her there. And after that she went on to be nursery maid for Lord Montague and she went on to have a family of children who are all respected around the village.

8.4 Regie's death

Alice:

Well kindness is not necessarily the best training for the young. Anyway I'm sorry if I upset your friend. I merely meant to teach her a salutary lesson. Anyway it all happened at the worst time for me, soon after Regie's death. And things were different in those days you have to understand. One thing that history should teach us is that things were different and they will be different again. Oh yes, and those "living memories" people have after you are gone are always of you in your crotchety old age, not when you are young and sprightly. When you die, everyone who remembers you thinks you were always old.

Listen I'm sorry about your mother, sometimes good intentions are not enough. Where was I? Yes Regie's death.

Regie died in 1926. That was the beginning of the worst time. Only Caryl and me left and we were really feeling the strain of keeping Cuffnells up to the standards we were used to. And there was that horrible business about the general strike. For a few days we felt that Britain might go the same way as Russia. Fortunately that did not happen.

There were death duties for Regie of course and they were crippling. Strangely enough death duties were introduced by that Harcourt who lived over in Minstead, when he was part of Mr Gladstone's government. He was uncle to Aubrey Harcourt who was engaged to my sister Tillie those many years ago. He ended up with the Nuneham Estate on the river near Oxford that should have gone to Tillie and Aubrey.

Well I suppose he must have paid death duties on it – I hope they were crippling.

Cuffnells actually belonged to Caryl now, but he let me stay there for as long as I wished. But it was getting harder and harder and more expensive to run. Caryl and I were going to have to sell some of the our assets. There was no market for any of the Hargreaves land and we did not want to give it away for a silly price.

9. - Manuscript sale and re-emergence as “Alice in Wonderland”

9.1 They decide to auction

I can't remember who thought of it first, but one day when Caryl and I were talking, our eyes fell on the manuscript that Dodgson had given me sixty years before – it was the first hand written manuscript of Alice in Wonderland – called “Alice Underground”

“Do you think there;s any value in this?” I said, picking it up. It meant little to me as we had the copies of the facsimile that Dodgson had produced and of course we had many copies of Alice in Wonderland itself. Caryl said he would ask around among his friends next time he was up in town. He took it to Sotherby's and they were quite excited by the possibility. There was great interest in the Alice books in America and, if we were lucky, a number of wealthy collectors might compete with it at auction.

When the world heard that the Alice manuscript was going for auction there a move to keep it in England . “Would I accept £5,000.?”

Well Sotherby's thought they could get more, maybe £10,000, and keeping it in England was not going to pay the heating bills for Cuffnells, Caryl was all for letting it go to auction and in the end we did.

9.2 Auction scene

Auctioneer:

Lot number 319, the original manuscript of “Alice Underground” presented to Miss Alice Liddell by Mr Charles Dodgson.

English man 1:

Five thousand pounds

American 1:

Six

Alice

And on up to 10,000 from the Americans

English 2

Ten thousand And one hundred pounds

American

Ten thousand five hundred

English 2:

Eleven thousand.

Alice:

And so it went up and up. The British Museum dropped out at 12,500, but still the British

bookseller Mr Maggs(?? check name) kept up with the American.

American:

14,500

English 2:

(hesitation) 14,600

American;

15,000

English 2:

(longer hesitation) 15,200

American:

15,400

(silence)

Auctioneer:

Going once, going twice ...It is yours Mr Rosenbach.

9.3 Life as Alice in Wonderland again

Alice

It was a record price. Cuffnells was saved for a good many years, Caryl could look forward to a prosperous future, and, in the eyes of the world I was once again “Alice in Wonderland.” The ten year old child had come back to save me when I was almost at the point of despair.

After having been Mrs Hargreaves of Cuffnells for almost fifty years I was suddenly Alice again – Alice in Wonderland – the “real” Alice. I was in the newspapers and I was famous. I liked it and I loathed it. It was nice to be recognised and courted again instead of being just another widow who had lost two sons in the war. But I was continually being badgered by questions that were always the same and many of them plain silly, like did I really have a long neck like in the pictures. And was Dinah the kitten still alive. After sixty years, I ask you!

But there it was, I was the “real” Alice, and so I remained for the last six short years of my life. Caryl became my helpmeet and business manager and there were press interviews and things to sign and “Alice in Wonderland” tins of biscuits and pottery and playing cards and so on.

9.4 Visit to America

The most exciting time was our visit to America. I'd been before with Regie when he was visiting the Hargreaves business interests in Canada, but this time it was different. I was as famous now as any “movie star” as film stars were called in America. I was more famous than the prime minister. Caryl and my sister Rhoda came with me and we went over in the huge liner the Berangaria from Southampton. There were newspapers interviews, and radio interviews and special visits all over the place. The big occasion was when I was given a Doctorate of Literature at Columbia University. I wonder what Papa would have thought when I became a Doctor of Literature simply because I had encouraged that strange and awkward Mr Dodgson to write his children's story down.

I can't say I didn't enjoy the attention but oh I was tired, so tired and so pleased when we got home to England.

9.5 Caryl and his marriage

Caryl was a big help to me in all this. He looked after the business side and took care of me all the time we were in New York or on the boat.

Those tales of Caryl and I falling out at Cuffnells were much exaggerated. We always supported one another. I always knew that Caryl was a wonderful son to me. He helped with the Alice business and allowed me to live in Cuffnells as long as I liked even though, as the surviving son, it was, strictly speaking, his.

At this time Caryl met a Mrs Hanbury Tracy. She was a widow with three children and was suitable enough I suppose. But I never really could accept her as part of my family. Quite soon Caryl and she had a daughter. It was wonderful to have a grandchild of course. I was so happy that the Hargreaves line would continue.

9.6 Alice's death

I was in my eighties now. I would spend the summer at Cuffnells watching the trees and the gardens and the deer as they wandered over our lawns. Then in the winter I would go to Westerham in Kent to be near my sister Rhoda.

The end came after I had been taken out on a long drive by the chauffeur. I still enjoyed seeing the countryside and did not realise how cold I was until I got home. I went to bed and never got up again. The press got wind of it somehow and I remember my nurse reading sentimental tosh about how “the real Alice” was lying dying surrounded by souvenirs and memories of Alice in Wonderland – little pottery figures of the white rabbit on the mantelpiece, and so on. My real memories were of Regie and my two elder boys and the thought that perhaps I might be back together with them soon. I remembered then the verse I had written out for Reggie when we had been married for eight years

So we through this world's waning night
May hand in hand pursue our way
Shed round us order, love and light,
And shine into the perfect day.

When I was gone there was much talk in the papers and magazines. I was compared to Dante's Beatrice, and Keats' Fanny Brawne, and many many more. Not quite true, but I like to flatter myself that without me, Mr Dodgson – Lewis Carrol – would be long forgotten.

The Alice books are the things that will be remembered.

That had always been our aim and now it was coming to an end.

9.7 The end for Cuffnells

But the end of my story first. Caryl found it hard to keep up Cuffnells. It became a hotel for a short while then came the war and the army took it over. The second world war, as it was called, killed my beautiful house just as surely as the first killed my beautiful sons. I hate wars. Oh, how I hate wars.

The bull dozers came in and knocked Cuffnells down. Bits of it got taken away. The fireplace to the inn in Bank, the windows back to the builder whose family had built them

and the plants from the garden got spread around Lyndhurst. Maybe some of you have some of them in your garden. Cuffnells has gone, disappeared from the landscape as if it had never been.

And I have done the same. Forget Alice Pleasance Hargreaves, née Liddell. My ashes lie in the churchyard with those of Regie but nothing else of me. Best to remember Alice of Alice in Wonderland – the young girl frozen in time as a seven year old by that strange and brilliant man Mr Dodgson.

Remember the White Knight and the man sitting on a gate. Both of those are supposed to be portraits of Charles Dodgson, It's a bit sentimental of course, that was one of his faults but brilliant and memorable and full of astonishing invention like the man himself.

(Dodgson comes on with the three girls and the rest of the child cast and reads)

9.8 Dodgson reads *Sitting on a gate*

Dodgson (reads)

Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. —the mild blue eyes and kindly smile of the Knight—the setting sun gleaming through his hair, and shining on his armour in a blaze of light that quite dazzled her—the horse quietly moving about, with the reins hanging loose on his neck, cropping the grass at her feet—and the black shadows of the forest behind— as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against a tree, watching, and listening, in a half dream, to the melancholy music of the song.

'I'll tell thee everything I can;
There's little to relate.
I saw an aged aged man,
A-sitting on a gate.
"Who are you, aged man?" I said,
"and how is it you live?"
And his answer trickled through my head
Like water through a sieve.

He said "I hunt for haddocks' eyes
Among the heather bright,
And work them into waistcoat-buttons
In the silent night.
And these I do not sell for gold
Or coin of silvery shine
But for a copper halfpenny,
And that will purchase nine.

"I sometimes dig for buttered rolls,
Or set limed twigs for crabs;
I sometimes search the grassy knolls
For wheels of Hansom-cabs.

I heard him then, for I had just

Completed my design
To keep the Menai bridge from rust
By boiling it in wine.

And now, if e'er by chance I put
My fingers into glue
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
Into a left-hand shoe,
Or if I drop upon my toe
A very heavy weight,
I weep, for it reminds me so,
Of that old man I used to know—
Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo—

That summer evening, long ago,
A-sitting on a gate.'

(Dodgson exits down the aisle leading all the children. As he passes he bows to Alice and she acknowledges him)

9.8 Goodbye from Alice and the White Rabbit

Alice:

That is what you should remember, the books the poems, the joyful nonsense. Forget Alice Pleasance Hargreaves, she is just another of the thousands of women who lived in this place in its past and made it what it is.

(White Rabbit comes on again and takes hold of Alice)

White Rabbit:

It's late, it's late, it's time to go

Alice:

Yes I'm coming. Good night. Good night.

(She exits with the rabbit)

(The lights go down they take their bows)

Nick Mellersh 2008/2009